

USAGE SOARS IN PSC TELEMEDICINE TRIAL

Jefferson City (April 3, 1998)--A visual telecommunications consultation between doctors located in different areas of Missouri provides quick, and sometimes life saving information to treat a patient. Since May of 1995, that valuable exchange of information has been available to medical personnel through the Missouri Telemedicine Network.

A recent report issued by the Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission indicates a dramatic growth in those using the Missouri Telemedicine Network. In some instances, usage has more than doubled over the past year.

The **Missouri Public Service Commission**, the University of Missouri-Columbia Health Sciences Center and the Missouri Rural Opportunities Council were instrumental in the development of the telemedicine trial in Missouri. The PSC named a task force to assist in the implementation of a telemedicine project in Missouri. PSC Staff members played a key role in the development of the trial currently underway. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, GTE Midwest Incorporated, ALLTEL Missouri, AT&T and Northeast Missouri Rural Telephone Company as well as the participating locations provided initial funding for the trial.

Telecommunications technology and the medical community joined hands in Missouri in May of 1995, making telemedicine a reality to thousands of rural Missourians.

The trial, which is scheduled to end this year, allows rural Missouri physicians to consult with specialists on the interactive tv network, saving patients unnecessary travel, expense and time away from work.

The program has strengthened the role of rural clinics and hospitals, enabling them to continue care on site for patients whom they may have referred to larger medical centers.

The following chart illustrates the dramatic increase in usage in the areas of interactive consultations, teleradiology and educational programs:

<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>
Interactive Consultations	9	59	421
Teleradiology Consultations	412	1551	2866
Educational Programs	20	100	360

(More)

Interactive Consultations involve a patient and doctor at one site on the network consulting with a doctor at another site. A Teleradiology Consultation involves the transmission of x-rays from rural sites to the MU Health Sciences Center. Educational Programs primarily involve continuing education classes, grand rounds and graduate nursing programs.

A committee has been formed to evaluate the Missouri Telemedicine Network project. They will be examining the issue of whether and how this project can be sustained on a permanent basis once the trial is completed at the end of the year.